

MEMORANDUM

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

County of Placer

TO: BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

DATE: April 28, 2003

FROM: TIM HACKWORTH / RICK DONDRO

SUBJECT: TAHOE CITY TRANSIT CENTER

ACTION REQUESTED / RECOMMENDATION

Provide Direction to the Department on the Tahoe City Transit Center.

BACKGROUND / SUMMARY

The Project is a proposed Intermodal Transit Center and parking lot to be located on the U.S. Forest Service tract south of the intersection of the Tahoe City "Y." The Planning Commission approved a Conditional Use Permit in April of 2001. There were two appeals of the project which came to the Board in July and August of 2001, May of 2002, and March 2003. The Board directed that a more extensive alternative site study be undertaken. A summary of the report is provided in Attachment 3.

TRPA has received approval for \$750,000 to study a realignment of Hwy 89 which would address traffic problems at Fanny Bridge. Three conceptual alignments have been identified that would run through the Forest Service parcel near the proposed Transit Center (see Attachment 2). The study will take at least two years to complete and, at the conclusion, a new highway alignment may be selected.

The Board is wearing two hats with respect to the project. The County is the project applicant and the Board is acting in this role at this meeting. The Board is also the body that will hear the appeal but a ruling on the appeal would be premature at this time. Staff has developed three Options for the Board to consider in its role as project applicant. These options are discussed briefly below and in more detail in Attachment 1.

Option 1 Place the project on hold until the Hwy 89 Realignment Study is complete and an alternative is selected. The idea behind this option is that the future location of Hwy 89 could have a bearing on the Transit Center. Therefore, the decision on the Transit Center should wait until the future highway alignment is set.

Option 2 Direct Staff to recirculate the EIR and bring back the appeals for action. The concept here is that the highway alignments under study do not conflict with the Transit Center site and that the proposed site is compatible with all of the highway alternatives. Therefore, the Transit Center decision can be made independently of the highway realignment decision.

Option 3 Withdraw the project application.

ENVIRONMENTAL

An EIR has been prepared for the project but portions of it should be recirculated before it can be used as the basis for action on the project appeals.

FISCAL IMPACT

The project is funded from the following sources: \$1.5 million Federal earmark funds; \$150,000 in TRPA Air Quality Funds; and \$150,000 in Resort Association Infrastructure Funds. TRPA funded the preparation of the EIR/EIS document. There is no specific deadline for use of the Federal funds but lack of progress could lead to de-obligation of the funds.

ATTACHMENT 1

BOARD OPTIONS

DATE: April 28, 2003

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Staff has prepared three alternate actions that the Board could consider for the Tahoe City Transit Center project. The options and background for each are discussed below.

Option 1 Place the project on hold until the Hwy 89 Realignment Study is complete and an alternative has been selected. The proposed Transit Center is located east of the realignment options (Attachment 2). The completion of the realignment study could provide more information on how a realigned highway and the Transit Center would interact. If a realignment is approved, it would divide the Forest Service parcel. The piece to the north and east would be the logical place for the Transit Center.

The Board could decide that information from the Realignment Study is critical to the decision on the Transit Center. It is anticipated that the Study, Environmental documents and adoption of a new route of will take at least two years (and probably more) to complete. When the Transit Center project is reactivated, the EIR/EIS would need to be fully updated and recirculated as the information in the current document would be dated.

While the Hwy 89 Realignment studies are in progress, staff could watch for opportunities in the area for alternate sites for the Transit Center. Staff could work jointly with the Redevelopment Agency and their search for additional parking.

Option 2 Direct Staff to recirculate the EIR and bring back the appeals for action. The Board is not in a position to take action on the appeals at the April 28th meeting because portions of the environmental document need to be recirculated. Based upon comments by the Board and events that have occurred over time, there are several things that staff recommends be incorporated in the EIR before the Board takes action on the appeals. This will give the public and appellants the opportunity to make formal comments and incorporate this into the final EIR. After the Final EIR is prepared, then the Board would be in a position to conduct a public hearing and take action on the appeals. It is estimated that this process will take 8 months and cost \$50,000. The recirculated sections could include:

- a. The alternative site study.
- b. A phased parking lot where the full 130 spaces would not be constructed with the initial phase of the facility. After the Center is in operation, we would have a better idea of the need for the full parking lot and whether to construct the additional spaces.

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- c. Rewording of mitigation measures that address the widening of Fanny Bridge. The current measures call for the completion of an environmental document and secured funding for the widening of the Hwy 89 bridge over the Truckee River before the Transit Center could be opened. There are now other improvements that are under study that could provide benefits to traffic circulation instead of widening the bridge. These include a bike/pedestrian bridge over the dam and traffic controls at the bridge. The proposal is to rewrite the mitigation measure to allow for alternate solutions and phased mitigation with a reduction in the size of the parking lot.
- d. Incorporation of the latest information on the realignment of Hwy 89.

Option 3 Withdraw the project application. The Board could decide that it is not appropriate to proceed with the project at this time. This action would end the appeal process. If the Board decided to undertake the project in the future, a new application and Environmental Document would need to be prepared.

A secondary issue associated with this option is whether to remove the project from the Community Plan, Regional Transportation Plan and Environmental Improvement Program. The Board could direct staff to begin the process to remove or modify the Transit Center Project that is currently contained in these documents. The Board could also decide that the Transit Center should remain in these documents but not proceed with implementation at this time.

The \$1.5 million in Federal funds would be lost if the application were withdrawn. The funds were designated in an earmark which required special lobbying and legislative action.

ATTACHMENT 3

SUMMARY OF ALTERNATE SITE STUDY

DATE: April 28, 2003

SUBJECT: TAHOE CITY TRANSIT CENTER

BACKGROUND

At the August 2001 public hearing for the Intermodal Transit Center, the Board directed staff to conduct a more extensive study of alternate sites. DPW hired Environmental Science Associates, an environmental firm from Sacramento, to conduct the study. A public workshop was held on June 10, 2001, to present the sites and the evaluation criteria. DPW then presented the report at the North Tahoe Regional Advisory Council on September 12, 2002.

The purpose of the Alternative Site Evaluation study is to provide additional information for the Board of Supervisors and the public as part of a decision-making process for the Tahoe City Intermodal Transit Center. If the project is to proceed, the information in the study will be added into the Alternatives Chapter of the EIR/EIS and recirculated for environmental review. A copy of the report has been provided to your Board under separate cover.

SUMMARY

Nine sites in the Tahoe City core area were chosen for evaluation, including two sites on the 64-Acre tract. The sites include both developed and vacant parcels. A map of the sites is attached. The No Project Alternative is discussed in Attachment 5. The sites were evaluated using six factors:

- Ridership
- Multimodal Connectivity
- Operational Factors
- Passenger Factors
- Environmental Factors
- Cost

Two sites nearest the Tahoe City "Y" scored the highest if cost and availability are not considered. They scored highest because the location is ideal for access and is the center of activity. The cost to acquire the sites would be high and existing business would need to be relocated. Once cost and availability are factored in, the proposed 64-Acre site scores highest.

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ANALYSIS

The Intermodal Transit Center needs to be located in the immediate vicinity of the Tahoe City "Y" in order to be functional as an Intermodal Center. If the project is to remain in the commercial core of Tahoe City, it is necessary to look at sites that are already developed. The alternative sites study did not identify any viable location that is worthy of further study in place of the proposed Forest Service site. While locations closer to the Tahoe City "Y" would be more advantageous for an intermodal center, the costs associated with property acquisition, business relocation and building demolition would be prohibitive. The study supports the statement in the EIR/EIS that *"it could be possible to purchase individual parcels if there were willing sellers, assembling a sufficient number of contiguous parcels could be difficult even if funding was available for purchasing private land"*.

